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3 THE FIRST WEEK FOR YOUR BABY PIGS



U.S. Bureau of Animal Industry Agricultural Research Administration
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Care given the sow and pigs during the first week after farrowing often means the difference between profit and loss.

About one-third of all pigs farrowed die before they are weaned. Half of this loss occurs during the first three days of age. These are averages. The good manager's losses run lower. He starts protecting his investment even before the pigs are born.

Cleaning and disinfecting the farrowing pen thoroughly is a part of the preparation. Another is washing and cleaning the sow before she is placed in the farrowing pen. The next important step is to be on hand when the pigs are farrowed.

SEE THAT BROODER IS WORKING

Let's say your baby pigs have arrived. The first job is to see that each pig is dried and has its stomach warmed and filled with the first suckle of colostrum milk. Within the first few hours the litter is taken to an adjacent room where each pig is ear marked and weighed. The small, needle-like teeth are cut off and the umbilical cord clipped and disinfected.

Other jobs at farrowing time are seeing that bedding is clean and dry, and that guard rails are provided. See that the electric brooder is working properly and that the pigs are nested under the brooder after getting their colostrum milk. After the third day there is not nearly as much danger from crushing because the pigs can move about more nimbly.

SOW NEEDS QUIET AND REST

The sow needs attention, too. Quiet and rest for 24 hours after farrowing is nature's way of helping her recuperate after the labor of parturition. She should receive little or no feed during this period, but there should be ample lukewarm water available to reduce feverishness.

On the second day start feeding the sow a light, cooling ration composed largely of wheat bran and middlings, ground grain, and a protein supplement. The amount of feed should be regulated to avoid digestive disturbances and scours in the young pigs. Start heavier feeding 3 to 4 days after farrowing. Increase the amount of feed gradually each day so that the sow is consuming a full ration at the end of a week or 10 days. The ration during this critical period may be fed as a slop, or as a dry feed with access to water.

A good feed mixture after farrowing consist of 500 pounds of ground yellow corn, 400 pounds of ground oats, 600 pounds of standard middlings, 200 pounds of bran, 100 pounds of alfalfa meal, 75 pounds of high grade tankage or meat scraps, 75 pounds of fishmeal, and 50 pounds of mineral mixture.

TROUBLES ARE ONLY MINIMIZED

Even with this kind of care for newborn pigs there are many hazards. Those born weak often die. Accidental deaths and cripples will still occur. If the sow fails to come in milk the pigs may starve. Digestive disturbances and disease add to the death toll or to the unthriftness of pigs that survive. Better management is the only means of keeping these losses to a minimum.

Here are points to remember during the first week of life for your pigs:

- ✓ See that pigs are farrowed in a clean pen.
- ✓ Dry the pigs and see that they get their first suckle of colostrum milk.
- ✓ Cut off needle-like teeth, clip umbilical cord, and disinfect navel.
- ✓ Have electric brooder in working order and see that guard rails are in place.
- ✓ See that sow has quiet and rest for 24 hours after farrowing.
- ✓ Start light feeding after first day and gradually increase ration until full amount needed is being taken a week to 10 days after farrowing.
- ✓ Watch for digestive disturbances in pigs. Call a veterinarian if losses start.

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